

# Illegal Encampments on the Barony

## Views & Experiences of Residents



Draft Report June 2019

DRAFT REPORT

## Introduction

In the last 6 months alone we have seen multiple illegal encampments on the Barony. A number of residents have raised the issue with me. From speaking to residents about this I know that they have simply had enough and want action taken.

I can't promise a quick fix but want to do what I can to help. I respect the right of people to live the lifestyle they choose. I also understand not everyone from a particular community behaves in the same way. But I personally do not respect the choice to turn a residents park into an encampment and especially not when I have seen first hand the rubbish that is left and hear from many residents about anti-social behaviour. The lack of a local site is no excuse for leaving the park in a mess.

The aim of the evidence collection exercise was to put into black and white the problems associated with the encampments to make the strongest possible case for action. **142 residents took part and this report belongs to them.** Whilst the numbers are important it is the individual accounts that are the most powerful in demonstrating why we must act. Here is one such example:

*"I look onto the car park off Coronation Gardens. I have seen myself people coming from encampments defecating on the floor. My friends 9 year old daughter was attacked by another child when she wouldn't pay to use the play area. My friend went to speak to the parents about it and was told to f\*ck off. My mum and daughter were walking on the park and out of nowhere someone drove off Middlewich Road really fast straight towards them. My mum was very scared by it."*

I am particularly concerned about the reports of what can only be described as dangerous driving with a number of residents telling me they thought it was only a matter of time until someone was seriously injured. We need immediate action. That is why I have decided to release this draft report with interim findings in the short term. I encourage other residents who want to give their views to do so online: [www.tinyurl.com/baronyparksurvey](http://www.tinyurl.com/baronyparksurvey)

).All the main political parties in Cheshire East want to find solutions to this problem. This is not a party political issue and I am willing to work with anyone positively on this challenge.



Dr Kieran Mullan  
**MP Candidate for Crewe & Nantwich (Conservatives)**

## Key Findings

**85% of participants said the presence of illegal encampments had limited the use of the Barony and its facilities**

**The top three activities highlighted were the children's play area (58%), dog walking (52%) and walking/jogging (50%).**

**85% of participants had witnessed or been a victim of anti-social behaviour.**

**90% of participants support the introduction of a barrier.**

## Survey Findings

Key findings were as follows

### **Has the presence of an illegal encampment limited your use of the Barony and it's facilities? If yes, in what way**

No 15%

Yes 85%

Childrens Play Area 58%

Dog Walking 52%

Walking/jogging 50%

*Top three only listed here. Totals greater than 100% as residents were able to select any option that applied to them.*

### **Have you witnessed or been a victim of any anti-social behaviour?**

Total percentage of any kind: 85%

Most common examples

Rubbish being left 83%

Harassment or intimidation of residents 33%

Anti-social driving on the field e.g. wheelies, underage driving 39%

Irresponsible driving near to residents 45%

Irresponsible driving near to dogs 26%

*Totals greater than 100% as residents were able to select any option that applied to them.*

### **Do you support the introduction of a form of barrier to restrict access to the Barony?**

Yes 90%

No 7%

Don't have a view 3%

### **Of those supporting a barrier, preferences were as follows:**

Low Wooden Fence 40%

Large Stone Boulders 41%

Hedges 22%

Built up embankment 22%

*Totals greater than 100% as residents were able to select any option acceptable to them.*

## Quotes from residents

"My wife and I had to abandon training our daughter to ride her bike because they were driving around on the field at high speed and we feared for our safety."

"Cars that come off at the junction don't seem to look at the lights, they just drive off. I don't want someone to get hurt."

"I have seen cars coming off the encampments very fast at the crossroads. One of my elderly neighbours was nearly hit. Another man was walking his dog and the same thing happened. He had to leap out the way. When he shouted at the driver they stuck two fingers up at him. I'm worried someone will be killed."

"Over the recent months when we have seen the encampments on the Barony Park I have still been exercising my 2 dogs and twice I have had to stop to allow vehicles to drive by from the play area. I did challenge one of the vehicles when it came towards myself and my dogs as to why they couldn't drive round the park on the road like everyone else and I was told that I shouldn't even be on the playing fields with my dogs and they should be on a lead!"

"Intimidated local scout group when they were using the fields for their activities by driving round and round them in a circle. I have also seen them driving straight across the middle of the field and then cutting straight in front of me and then blocking my way when I was walking down the path at the Sainsbury's end of the field. I have also seen children defecating in the bushes in the middle of the day when they were camped on Volunteer Fields."

"Witnessed young boys around 13 /14 driving across the field. They headed towards an elderly man who was walking his dog. The dog was scared too."

"Witnessed car driving across park, too fast and too close to my dog who was off her lead to enjoy a run around."

"We have witnessed vehicles driving across the park very close to residents, children, dogs and each evening being driven back and to across the park with full headlights, on occasions being driven by children. It is an accident / incident waiting to happen."

"I look onto the car park off Coronation Gardens. I have seen myself people coming from encampments defecating on the floor. My friends 9 year old daughter was attacked by another child when she wouldn't pay to use the play area. My friend went to speak to the parents about it and was told to f\*ck off. My mum and daughter were walking on the park and out of nowhere someone drove off Middlewich Road really fast straight towards them. My mum was very scared by it."

"Nearly ran over my dog on several occasions."

"I took my grandchildren to the play area and kids from the encampment said that we needed to pay to use it whilst they were there, They were very forceful about it and we left as I didn't want a confrontation with my grandchildren."

"I was driving and ended up facing a car with about six children in it trying to get onto the Barony. The driver got out and started being abusive and even banging on my car. He also reversed and accelerated at my car."

“Last year I was running with S C Harriers when the caravans descended on the field. There were a few calls out to us as we were running.”

“Speed driving across field to exit on Middlewich road, sometimes with aggression. Wanting to turn off Middlewich Road across the foot/cycle path, endangering walkers, cyclists. My wife was ordered to get out of the way of a car wanting to drive along the pavement near the car park.”

“I've seen a man driving on the way to an encampment, stop, get out, and urinate in plain view.”

“As a gym member I find it extremely frustrating that the gym closes when they arrive as I pay a membership and am unable to attend. I understand the gym staff have felt threatened but feel this should then become a police matter.”

“Last year I was walking my dog on the top field and someone drove up onto the field. His window was down so I caught his attention and I politely said to him that he shouldn't be driving on the field as there were dogs running free and children playing. He shouted abuse at me and drove off. I felt quite intimidated and reported it to the police at the time.”

“My mother was walking to work and because she looked at the encampment they shouted abuse and threats towards her.”

“I'm Primary School Teacher and had a family picnic for 37 families booked to go to the Barony. Due to the travellers and the consequent closure of the toilets we had to move it all.”

“Around 12 months ago my two children had fallen asleep in the car so I decided to pull up into the Barony gym car park for a few minutes peace. Almost immediately after switching off my engine I had a small white van driving towards me (from the field) mouthing for me to get off his field and giving me the finger. I chose to leave at this point as I didn't want confrontation. This man then followed me towards my home and I was forced to take a detour to lose him. I felt extremely shaken.”

“Attended a children's party on the 3G football pitch and children from an encampment were throwing mud at both adults and children at the party through the gate. One child through mud onto a 3 week old baby who was in his car seat at the time. The staff of the leisure facilities literally had to lock us in for the entirety of the party so we didn't get harassed. When one of the children was confronted about throwing mud he spat at the adult and threw mud in her face. We saw the children urinating on the children's play area and spitting constantly.”

“Being charged to go on the park. Human waste on the park. Being told to get off the park because it's theirs while they are here!”

“Some girls were playing on the park with my daughter of 5 years and were shouting expletive language and being abusive. I immediately left. Disgusting behaviour to say the least. Enough is enough now, something must be done.”

**Please note quotes may be edited for brevity and to protect the anonymity of individuals.**